

REMARKS

Claims 17, 23, 26, 28 and 30 have been amended. Claims 25, 29 and 32 have been canceled. Claims 1, 3-10, 13 and 15-24, 26-28, and 30-31 are now pending. A petition for extension of time (one-month) is being filed concurrently herewith. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the original claims and other claims in this and other applications. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above-referenced application in light of the amendments and following remarks.

At the outset, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation that claims 1, 3-10, 13, 15, 16 and 18-22 have been allowed. Applicants also acknowledge with appreciation that claims 25-27 and 29-31 are in condition for allowance if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Claim 23 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of dependent claim 25. Claims 24 and 26-27 depend from amended claim 23 and should be allowable along with amended claim 23. Similarly, claim 28 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of dependent claim 29. Claims 30-31 depend from amended claim 28 and should be allowable along with amended claim 28.

Claim 17 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for its dependency on a canceled claim. The rejection is respectfully traversed. Claim 17 has been amended to properly depend from claim 13, which in turn, depends from the allowable subject matter of claim 1. Consequently, claim 17 should be in immediate condition for allowance.

Claims 23, 24, 28 and 32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. patent no. 6,827,999 ("Ito"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As indicated above, claim 23 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of dependent claim 25. Claim 24 depends from amended claim 23 and should be allowable along with amended claim 23. Similarly, claim 28 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of dependent claim 29. Claim 32 has been canceled.

Consequently, all of the pending claims in the present application are believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to review and pass this application to issue.

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Respectfully submitted,

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